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EDITORIAL COMMENT



GRADING OF NURSES DISCUSSED

ON another page will be found a report of one of the stated meetings of the New York Academy of Medicine, held on the evening of December 19, under the auspices of the Section on Medicine, at which time a discussion was held on a plan for the grading of nurses. This is one of the most unreasonable propositions that has yet been considered, and we regret to say that the plan suggested was previously brought forward by a nurse.

We understand that the papers presented by the women who took part in this discussion in New York were so convincing in disapproval of this project that a number of the gentlemen who had formerly been in favor of it declared themselves converted to the nurses' point of view.

As time goes on and various problems arise threatening the whole educational structure of nursing progress, we are more and more convinced that the only enemies we have to fear are those within our own ranks. The cause for which the great nursing body is struggling,—a better type of woman, with a higher standard of education, that the sick in hospitals and in homes among the rich and the poor may have more efficient care,—is so absolutely right and just and unselfish that it is bound ultimately to succeed. Progress, however, has always been retarded, and is being retarded to-day, by the disloyalty of women within our own ranks who for some reason join forces with those commercial influences that are against us. It is not to be expected that organizations

composed of nurses shall be greatly different from other groups of people banded together for a definite purpose. There should be, if we are to progress, differences of opinion in order to maintain interest and to promote thought and effort, but on the great fundamental questions it ought to be possible to present a united front to the world.

Much of the opposition in legislation and in the establishment of educational standards, which it has cost great effort to combat, has come about through the disloyalty of individual members in our organizations.

Those who have not given careful study to this subject of the education of nurses, and who upon superficial examination think that such grading might be a happy solution of some of our difficulties, should read the paper presented by Miss Goodrich at the conference already referred to, and published in this issue of the *JOURNAL*. While her title is Inspector of Nurses, she is really at the head of what should better be called the Bureau of Nursing of the New York State Education Department, and the opportunity which she is having of studying the nursing situation educationally and from the outside, after her many years of executive experience in hospitals, qualifies her to judge wisely and impartially of the whole nursing situation. We beg of all nurses, whether specially interested in the subject of nursing education or not, to read this paper by Miss Goodrich, and not to pass it over, as may sometimes happen, through stress of duties.

We regret that space does not permit us to publish in full the paper given by Mrs. Twiss, president of the New York State Nurses' Association, in which she made a strong appeal to the medical men present not to undermine the good work already accomplished by trying to establish a triple, or even a double, standard of efficiency in the nursing world, and urged them to co-operate with the nursing body in its efforts to increase the efficiency of its service for the public good.

Such discussions of difficult nursing problems by members of the medical profession and nurses are to be desired, as offering the only fair way of coming to reasonable conclusions on many of our nursing problems.

We hardly need to repeat what is already well known, that there are so many attractive fields of occupation open to the educated young women of to-day that they will not enter that of nursing until it has been established on a better educational and professional basis. There should be no possible division of opinion among nurses as to the importance of higher preliminary requirements for the nurse in training and of the licensing by the state, through registration, of all women who earn their living by caring for the sick.

AN ARGUMENT FOR HIGHER STANDARDS

WE know of no stronger argument that can be brought forward in support of higher standards of education for admission to training schools than the paper by Dr. Walter Sands Mills in this JOURNAL. The faults that he so strongly, though kindly, condemns are not those of professional unfitness, but of personal manners and lack of good breeding. While education does not always eliminate a certain kind of innate coarseness and vulgarity, its tendency is toward refinement and greater consideration for the feelings of others. We expect such women as he has described to be the graduates of a hospital which maintains a training school for the exclusive purpose of getting the work done cheaply, and to have been permitted to remain through their course of two or three years because of their ability to perform each day a full round of manual labor. In a school where the pupils are properly selected and carefully supervised, such gross indelicacy would be quickly detected and would, by the right kind of a superintendent, be considered ground enough for dropping the pupil from the school. Of course, in many instances, the superintendent can only recommend the discharge of such women to the board of managers, who may look upon pupils of that kind as valuable workers at low wages. It is not always possible to influence a board, but the superintendent should at least make the attempt, and if they are intelligent people she can show them what an injury it is to the school to graduate a type of woman whom they would not tolerate in their own homes.

STERILIZATION OF INFECTIOUS LINEN

WE are sure our private duty readers will be extremely interested in the letter from Miss Dewey, published in the letter department this month, in answer to some of the suggestions made in an article by Dr. Crawford in the December JOURNAL, on the care of a typhoid patient. What Miss Dewey objects to is what we have sometimes called the laboratory method, that which may be learned from books or by the use of a microscope.

When we come to apply medical theories to private nursing in a home, we must, as Miss Dewey says, eliminate many things which are possible in a hospital, and resort to much simpler methods of accomplishing the same result.

First of all, we should bear in mind the fundamental principle that germs cannot rise from a damp surface, and that in the matter of the care of clothing of all kinds, so long as it can be kept soaking in cold

water, absolutely all danger of contagion from it is eliminated. The doctor in his advice loses sight of the disastrous effect upon linen of soaking in any chemical solution or boiling before the discharges have been removed, but this is of tremendous importance in the home, no matter what the circumstances of the people may be. Every good housewife has a feeling of real affection for her household linen, and nothing, from her point of view, reflects more unpleasantly upon the ability of her nurse than to find, after a period of illness, that her linen is spotted or full of holes. The proper way to care for infected or stained clothing in a private house is to put it immediately into cold water, leaving it there until it is wanted for washing. It should then be laundered in the ordinary way, all stains being washed out before boiling. The old-fashioned custom of boiling and hanging in the air to dry is, without exception, the best method of sterilization that has yet been discovered, by man or woman, but in this day when all sorts of labor-saving soaps have been substituted for boiling, and clothes are dried in a basement or attic, without exposure to sunlight or fresh air, it might be possible for clothing to go through such a washing without being freed from infection. The nurse must bear in mind that stains made by blood, or by discharges of any kind cannot be removed from linen after it has soaked in a chemical strong enough to act as a disinfectant, or been boiled, the effect of either being to coagulate the albumin and to leave a stain. The question of the proper care of linen is one of great importance to every private nurse, and our pages are open always to suggestions from those who have worked out methods satisfactory to themselves.

It is perfectly safe to handle infected clothing while it is wet, provided the person doing so has no abrasions of the skin and does not touch her face or clothing with her hands until they have been washed. Where a laundress is timid she can usually be reassured by being provided with a pair of rubber gloves for the first handling of the linen, but it is a densely ignorant person who cannot be made to understand that it is safe to handle such material while it is wet.

RED-CROSS-DETACHMENT PLAN VETOED

THE report of the decision of the proper authorities in regard to the establishment of Red Cross Detachments, the plan for which we commented on in the December editorials, did not reach us in time for special mention last month, although the news was given in the Red Cross Department of that number. It is gratifying to know that the protest of the nurses of the country, represented by the women called together to consider the matter, and led by Miss Delano, was given respectful

consideration and that their wishes were complied with. There now rests with the Committee on Nursing Service the responsibility of establishing such courses in home and first-aid nursing as will meet the requirements of lay members of the Red Cross who desire such instruction.

PROGRESS OF STATE REGISTRATION

Massachusetts is asking for an amendment to its Nurse Practice Act, providing for an inspector of training schools and giving the board of examiners authority to have inspections made of all training schools for nurses in the state.

Ohio is again to the front with a bill for state registration. This is one of the states where women have been prohibited from serving as state officials, which made a board of nurse examiners impossible. We do not know whether this obstacle has been removed.

New York is taking steps to make the Nurse Practice Act, as it now stands, apply to all women in the state who engage in the practice of nursing, to do away with re-registration, and to obtain reciprocity. There will be no changes in the standards of admission to training schools or in the requirements for registration, and the waiver as provided in the original bill will be attached to this amendment.

MATTER AND METHOD OF SEX EDUCATION

THE January issue of *Social Diseases* gives a report of the Special Committee of the American Federation for Sex Hygiene on the Matter and Methods of Sex Education, which is, in our opinion, the best summary of the subject we have seen. We heartily recommend it to those of our readers who are for any reason interested in this most difficult of all our modern problems. A copy of the magazine can be had by sending twenty-five cents to the Society for Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis, 105 West 40th Street, New York City.

MISS DEWITT'S BOOK

So many inquiries are coming in as to when Miss DeWitt's book on private duty nursing is to be ready that we take pleasure in announcing that it is now in press, but that the process of book-making is such a lengthy one that it will not be on sale until the spring. There are various slow procedures of proofreading, additions and eliminations which must be done with great care and which take more time than any one who has not had the experience of preparing a book for publication can appreciate.

It has been suggested that we need new books on specialties in nurs-

ing rather than books on general nursing. Miss DeWitt's will deal especially with the problems met by the new graduate in the home. There is need of a small text-book on strictly medical nursing, for one on surgical technique, on the acute diseases of childhood, on tuberculosis and mental nursing, on gynecology and genito-urinary diseases,—the subject in each case being treated from the nursing standpoint rather than the medical one. We believe there are scores of women in active nursing practice who possess the knowledge and the ability to write such books had they but sufficient confidence in themselves to do it. It seems a pity that women who have accumulated knowledge in such branches should pass out of the nursing field and leave nothing to their profession that will make their names endure. One of the characteristics of a profession is the literature it produces.

A WARNING TO JOURNAL SUBSCRIBERS

It has been reported to us from Detroit, Mich., that a man purporting to be an agent for the JOURNAL is endeavoring to collect subscriptions at the rate of \$1.25. No one is authorized to make these terms, and we warn all nurses to beware of such people. These impostors have been known to pocket the entire amount collected, and there have also been instances where nurses have had much difficulty in getting their JOURNALS when subscriptions were sent through unauthorized local agents. Where there is no central directory or authorized JOURNAL agent in a community, it is far safer for subscribers to send their money directly to our Philadelphia office in the form of a money order or check (not cash), making either payable to the AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING, the address to be 227 South Sixth Street, Philadelphia.

As rapidly as possible we are establishing agencies at the central directories maintained by nursing organizations, but it is not easy to reach them all, so the process is a slow one.

A CORRECTION

THE combination price of the AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING and the *Pacific Coast Journal of Nursing* is \$3, not \$3.50, as was stated in our December editorial, by mistake.